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ALONG TURKISH HIGHWAYS

By C. HENRY HOLBROOK

AMERICAN BOARD of COMMISSIONERS
FOR FOREIGN MISSIONS, BOSTON, MASS.

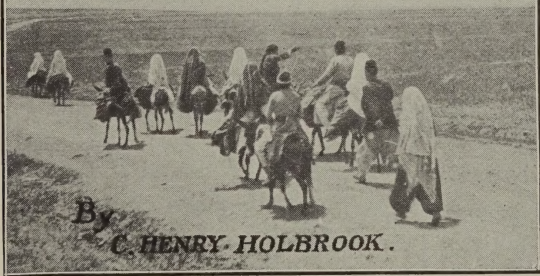
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ALONG TURKISH HIGHWAYS



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C. HENRY HOLBROOK.

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A QUARTERLY

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Introductory Note.

Rev. Charles Henry Holbrook sailed from New York, March 25, 1911, as a newly appointed missionary of the American Board, designated to the Western Turkey Mission. A letter to friends in this country, received October 4 and humorously styled "The first of a Series of Little Journeys to the Homes of the Turk and the New Turk, intended to be issued every little while," is, without Mr. Holbrook's knowledge, appropriated for the Envelope Series. For the pictures which so well illustrate the narrative, we are further indebted to the author's camera. As Turkey is once more brought sharply to the world's notice, we commend to our readers this vivid picture of present day scenes in one part of the Empire.

W. E. S.

Along Turkish Highways.

BY

REV. C. HENRY HOLBROOK
OF SIVAS.

Almost before I could realize that I had arrived at Constantinople I found myself aboard the train and started on my six days' journey inland to Cæsarea. The first day's ride was one of surprises and delights. I had supposed Turkish trains must be some sort of wild, uncouth affairs that would be a weariness to the flesh and to the patience, but I found them quite otherwise. The cars were of the common European compartment style, quite as comfortable as any I occupied in Europe and considerably more comfortable than many I've seen in America. The train rolls along leisurely all day from 5 a. m. to 8 p. m. stopping on an average of once every half-hour at bright, fresh little station-houses all cast in the same mould (unmistakably German,) with always an interesting crowd of people gaping at the never-ending wonder of the daily train. The hills and fields, smiling in the rich, new green of May-time, were in striking contrast to my dreams of barren wastes of gray and brown rocks and sand.

Alas, that was only the first day; for bit by bit the greenness dried away, prosperous towns became squalid

villages, sparkling lakes became desert stretches, and green hills wild, rugged gorges and bare brown mountains. But it was never uninteresting or wearisome. At night we stopped, put up at a hotel, (and very comfortable they were, too), and before daybreak turned out again to find the same train puffing and ready for another long day. Two and a half days brought me to Eregli where I left



A Stopping Place on the Railroad.

the train and started on my three and a half days *araba* journey to Cæsarea. I believe Dr. Patton declared that next to a Pullman train an *araba* was the most comfortable conveyance in which he had ever ridden. I quite agree, and am not sure that I should always except the Pullman car.

An *araba* day, to be thoroughly enjoyed, must begin the night before; all good days ought to begin then, but an

araba day must. You should begin to make up your bed when the swallows circle with weird cries in the paling yellow light of the late afterglow; not in the stuffy little room of the khan if you can help it, for you will find that already sufficiently occupied by various kinds of unpleasant bed-fellows, but upon the roof or on the porch under the stars. You may linger a bit if you wish at the door of the khan's general room to watch some late traveller eating his simple meal, sitting cross-legged before the little table about five inches high, or the *arabajis* smoking stolidly on a rug in the corner.

The same strange, plaintive cries from those black swooping circles will rouse you to the exhilarating freshness of the early morning. The village is already beginning to stir. Some early herd-boy has already headed his cows and a water-buffalo out toward the gray upland pastures leaving a cloud of dust behind. A light in the khan-stable reveals your *arabaji* already feeding the horses. If you are trying to "do as the Romans do" you will want to be off on the road at once (by 9 o'clock *a la Turca*), and you will get your breakfast an hour or so later in the *araba*; a bit of coarse whole wheat bread, some ripe olives, goat's milk cheese, and, if you have been very provident, some fresh spring onions. But if you are still a bit of a tenderfoot you will prefer to call it 4.30 a. m., (*a la Franca* time—everything Western in Turkey is *a la Franca*), and besides 4.30 a. m. sounds a deal more virtuous than 9 a. m.; and you will probably prefer to make yourself some hot cocoa at once over your alcohol-stove, and perhaps find some good New

England doughnuts in your lunch basket. But by all means you should be on the road in time for sunrise over these marvellous mountains.

For long stretches your road will run through deserts of rock, — rough, bare mountains of solid rock, gigantic boulders on steep brown hillsides; even the road over which you pass will often be furrowed with the tracks worn by long years of wagon wheels in the soft limestone; and this desert country has a fascination all its own.



Carts Drawn by Water Buffalo.

But not all of your journey by any means will be through the desert, for often your road will run through green pastures and meadows dotted here and there with beautiful willows. In pastures that slope away on every side great herds of cows and water-buffalo, horses, flocks of sheep or goats are grazing, with here and there the dark brown tents of the Kurdish herdsmen.

But it is the odd groups you will pass every now and then along the road that will doubtless interest you most.

Far off down the road a long black line, like a marching army, creeps slowly along with a strange, swaying, rhythmic motion; and if it is your first one, your heart will give a jump as you suddenly recognize that it is a caravan of camels loaded high with huge boxes and bales of goods. As the long string of disdainfully poised noses passes by you in solemn, sleepy dignity, you realize at last that you are really in the east, travelling an ancient caravan route!

Your commonest fellow-traveller will be the donkey; by twos or threes or scores, laden with everything conceivable, from watermelons or huge copper kettles to haystacks or complete household outfits with the baby's cradle on top! Sometimes he will come singly bearing on his back a sleepy old *hoja* in his snow-white turban and cloak of many colors, his bare feet stuck out at a comical angle balancing heelless slippers precariously on the upturned toes, with a faded umbrella poised above his placid face and patriarchal beard. Behind him perhaps will trudge his wife on foot, wrapped in a big white sheet and carrying a baby in her arms! (See Cover picture.)

But your human fellow-travellers will interest you most, and at times the road will be almost as populous as Broadway, with the scores of poor fellows tramping many days on foot through the dust and heat to find work on the roads near Adana, as they did in the fatal massacre year; I was surprised to find that most of those I met came from the province of Sivas, seven days journey away by wagon! I don't know how long these

poor men had taken to do it afoot. No work to be found in Sivas; so here they were out in search of a pittance to keep them and their families from starvation! No work, and all the railroads yet to be built; all the mines to be opened; all the irrigation works practically untouched, which the poor parched plains so sorely need and would so richly repay! And thousands upon thousands of men like these, eager to work for twenty cents a day! The Government at Constantinople is ambitious



In Search of Work.

to develop the resources of the country, and there is foreign capital waiting for the chance to get in; but the jealousies and intrigues of Christian Europe tie up everybody's hands and embarrass in every way possible the government of this people, which after centuries of despotism and degradation is striving so manfully for liberty, equality, and brotherhood.

The most discouraging problem in this land today is not Mohammedanism, but Turkey's pitiful subjection to

the selfish interests of her Christian neighbors. The moral degradation fostered by the Moslem system is to be sure a dreadful blight on the life of the nation; but as a religion the hold of Islam over the lives of the people is for the most part superficial and can last only so long as the dire poverty and ignorance last. Very few educated Moslems are Moslems at heart. If the nations of Europe, who pose as the friends of Turkey, would show her a little Christian consideration and help rather than hinder her struggle for economic and educational development, the day would not be far distant when the forces already powerfully at work for her spiritual regeneration would show to the world a people free, not only from the degradation of poverty and ignorance but also from the religious superstition and moral iniquity of ages.

By an odd chance my first opportunity to do a bit of missionary work was for one of these Sivas men who had fallen sick with malaria and been left behind in the public room of a miserable little khan, with a companion to care for him. They had no medicine of course, were destitute of food and had scarcely anything with which to cover the poor fellow during his violent chills. I did what little I could for him and left some quinine with his friend;—but the little incident and the memory of the men's faces lingered with me for a long time. The destitution and forlornness of the sick man were so typical of thousands of his fellow-countrymen; and the strong, intelligent, winsome face of the young fellow who was remaining behind, in such loyal devotion, to care tenderly for one who was only a chance travelling comrade, was equally typical of thousands of such young fellows.

I had another good opportunity to make my first acquaintance with a typical young Turk of the interior, and to see the effect the new order of things is having on such young fellows. He was a soldier just returning to his home in Cæsarea after three years of discipline and campaign-



A Typical Turkish Soldier.

ing with the army in Albania. He had left home, as he himself said, a young barbarian from the interior, almost untouched by any of the refinements of civilization. He was returning alert, ambitious, gentlemanly, and very attractive in personality. Compulsory army service is as great a hardship in Turkey as anywhere in Europe and perhaps greater, especially for the young Armenians who are now drafted just at the age when they are eager for an education or are needed at home. Many stories are told of harsh discipline and intense suffering from changes of climate, among those sent on the hopeless campaigns into the Arabian desert where nature so ably defends her nomad children. But there is at least another side to the story: for many of those young Turks the two or three years of army life is the only educational training

and contact with the civilized world that is likely to fall to their lot.

As we were both travelling to Cæsarea our *arabas* kept together, and from this Turkish soldier I learned a great deal about army affairs, the new regime as he understood it, and Turkish life in general. In another *araba* which also kept us company, was a young Turkish girl returning to her home in Cæsarea, after studying at a girls' school in Constantinople. This of course is quite unusual for Turkish girls, especially in the interior, and I was much surprised when, with her uncle's permission, she requested me to take her picture *unveiled!* Occasionally noon-time will catch you still far out on the treeless sun-scorched plain, and



Without Her Veil.

you will be glad to camp by the roadside with the donkeys and their drivers. The driver, however, will usually plan to reach at least a roadside khan where he may water his horses and buy grain for their feed. Some-

times in the sultry heat of the early afternoon you will pass through a drowsy little village where the silent, sun-blached street that winds between blank walls of mud-brick and closed shutters will be lined with sleeping men and dogs, with here and there the white *char-shaf* of a woman moving like some strange ghost in the glaring light of noon; or perhaps you will find a group of men squatting over their coffee-cups at the door of the village khan.



The Khan on the Plain.

But after the blazing sun has dropped below the crest of the bare, bleak hills, and the twilight shadows begin to thicken across the desert plateau, the lonely khan far out on the plain will look very welcome and homelike, and nothing you have ever eaten tasted any sweeter than will the steaming hot rice-*pilaff* or *paklajan-kibab* they will make for you, or the cool, fresh *voghout* you have already learned to like. The *araba* day ends as it began in the cool fresh air of the house-top under those stars

of such piercing brilliance. Three days and a half in the *araba* brought me to Cæsarea and, as the custom is in all our mission-stations, some of the missionaries met me several miles out on the road, with a royal lunch. The mission-compound is on the vineyard covered hillsides above Talas, a town six miles out of Cæsarea. You may imagine what a joy it was when at last I drove through its gates, and after my two months of travelling was *at home*, at least for a while.

To try to chronicle the events of my three months in Talas would swell this letter far beyond any reasonable proportions; but perhaps a few of the many experiences



The Boys' Club of Cæsarea.



Panorama

which have crowded these first happy weeks will give you some idea of the new life into which I have entered.

Of course, of special interest to me was the fine new building of our Kindergarten ,and the Boys' Club Building with its horde of Turkish street boys.

Cæsarea is a very oriental city—a very Turkish city, with narrow, winding streets between blank walls of brown stone or mud-brick, all the houses being built as close together as in a New York tenement block; with almost no windows opening on the street, and what there are heavily grated with iron so that they look more like prisons than homes. They are of one or two stories with flat earth roofs, generally overgrown with rank



of Talas.

Boys' School on Heights

weeds. There are scarcely any trees in the city except around the government houses, and only a few dirty squares, with ill-kept public fountains and crowded with carts and produce. Nearly every square is a market: — the flour market, the vegetable market, the wood market. But the main trading is done in the bazaar, a rambling building covering several acres and divided into many "streets" lined with shops selling all kinds of wares.

Most of my sight-seeing has been quite incidental to business trips, for from the very first I found plenty to occupy me most of the time. Ten days after my arrival the Wingates departed for furlough in America, leaving the work of the station to the five ladies and myself.

As there were three more weeks of school, and the ladies were pretty well occupied with the Girls' School and Kindergartens, not to mention all the treasury work and house-keeping cares, as well as the new building for the Girls' School for which ground was just being broken, my work naturally was to do what I could for Mr. Wingate's seventy boys in the High School on the hill.

They were busy weeks indeed, with final examinations, preparations for Commencement, prize-speaking contests, the school "Drama", and the countless little details of administration; but they were a rare opportunity for me to get in touch at once with the life and problems of a boys' school, with which I hope to have much to do in the years to come. With the teachers and the boys of the two upper classes, who spoke surprisingly good English, I formed in a few short weeks many ties of friendship. We went on tramps together, climbed Ali Dagh (a small mountain near-by), and I often ate with them at the school. I had chances to help with Commencement parts and in the preparations for the play, which for the boys was the great event of Commencement week. It was a great event, too; a patriotic drama in six acts portraying the oppression of the old régime and the heroic struggle for liberty in which Turk, Armenian, and Kurd alike joined. The spirit of the play was thoroughly wholesome and inspiring to the best ideals; it was acted and staged with a skill and dramatic finish I have rarely seen among amateurs in America. These oriental peoples are natural actors. They do not have our stupid Western awkwardness and self-consciousness to overcome, but



The Commencement Dramatics.

express themselves naturally and with a delightful grace. The picture above shows one scene from the play, a wild mountain fastness where a band of patriots are gathered to lay plans for the Revolution.

I think it would be a surprise to many of you at home in America to see what a gay and busy time Commencement week is, out here in the interior of Turkey; there was the play and the prize-speaking contest for the boys, the cantata for the girls, the kindergarten entertainment, the farewell reception to a beloved teacher who was leaving, and the senior reception to parents and friends, on the lawn under the trees. As the only Ameri-

can man in the station, I was kept busy presiding, besides making four public addresses and preaching one sermon in three days. At sunset on Baccalaureate Sunday we held a quiet, little vesper service in English in a vineyard high up on the hillside overlooking the plain and the beautiful western mountains. It was an occasion many will not soon forget.

Right in the midst of Commencement week came an event which almost overshadowed all the rest. It was the visit of the Catholicos of Sis, — the first time he had ever visited Cæsarea. Suddenly informed of his approach, we crowded into our station-wagon and joined the long line of *arabas* which went far out on the road to greet him and escort him into the city, in honor and dignity. It was most picturesque and oriental to see the forty or fifty gayly decorated *arabas*, the more than one hundred horsemen, the multitude of flags and banners, and the seven superb Arab steeds, gayly caparisoned but riderless, that walked with such majesty and grace before His Holiness. Then followed days of receptions, fetes, addresses, and, most important of all, the day on which, at his own request and before we could extend an invitation, the Catholicos made the pilgrimage out to Talas and visited our schools. The gay escort of the first day was repeated, and as he rode into Talas under our triumphal arches of flowers and flags, he was greeted by original songs and poems by our boys and girls, and hailed by rejoicing crowds on the housetops.

In his address to the people in the large Gregorian Church of Talas, the Catholicos made the chief point of

his discourse a hearty commendation of the work done by our American schools, and a tribute to their Christian character and motives. In most emphatic language he urged his people to take pattern by their Christianity, and by all means to avail themselves of the educational advantages they offer. This from one of the two highest spiritual heads of the Armenian Church, and in Talas,



Seven Promising Graduates.

where opposition to our work from Gregorians has often been bitter, was most significant and encouraging.

But to me the greatest cause for gratitude, and evidence of the sound fruitfulness of the years of labor, was the fact that every one of the ten graduates, seven

boys and three girls, planned to teach in our village schools—the real frontier of the Kingdom's growth. I wish I had space to tell you about the seven fine fellows whose picture is on the preceding page. A school that can turn out seven graduates like that is surely worth all that it costs in money, time and sacrifice. I got to know and honor every one of these boys in the few short weeks before they went out to take up their share of our burden; five of the seven I have seen several times during the summer, in their homes and at their work. I speak of the boys because I know them; as much could surely be said of the girls.

I wish some of you at home who think that we who have come out here as your representatives are making a great sacrifice, and who perhaps are wasting pity on us, would try to imagine what it means to these boys and girls to become missionaries, at the age of eighteen. For a few short years they have lived in the atmosphere of a strong Christian school and known the inspiring fellowship and guidance of teachers who have opened up an entire new world to their eyes; who have surrounded them with books and friends and guided their development into strong wholesome wide awake young men and women. Now they find themselves suddenly called away to a distant village, many days' journey from their own home, and among strangers. They no longer have the atmosphere of the school or the presence of teachers to guide and inspire them; books and friends are gone. Except perhaps for the preacher, they are the only educated people in town. They, in their turn, must bring

the vision of the great wide world with its hopes and possibilities to these boys and girls of the far away village; out of their little stock of knowledge (as high school graduates) and out of the memory of those few short years at the mission school they must become the guide and inspiration of the village life.

It is the same situation which a young teacher in America often faces, especially in the country districts; only here the contrasts and the difficulties of the problem are greatly intensified. Here how much more truly is the teacher a little candle shining alone in a great darkness! These teachers have not only themselves to care for, but often a widowed mother to support and young brothers and sisters to send to school; and all on a salary ranging from \$50 to \$80 a year. Do you wonder the temptation is strong to give it up and go to America where they can earn \$10 or \$15 a week in a factory? When you pray for missions remember these boy and girl teachers of the village outstations in their lonely trials and temptations and in their magnificent work on one of the frontiers of the Kingdom of God.

I wonder if you have missed in this story of mine, some of the elements you are accustomed to expect in a missionary letter: the tales of blood-curdling atrocities, persecutions; the dense ignorance and dire poverty of the people; the awful sin, degradation and suffering. These tales are not absent because they are not here to tell, nor because my own heart has not been stirred with sympathy and indignation. The time for them will come later when I may attempt to describe the awful needs

that I see all about me. But as far as possible, in this letter, I want to make you see this life as I have seen it in these few months; to paint this happier, more normal picture of our lot and opportunities. I think I have told you enough, however, to make you see that I am supremely happy and content in my work and prospects here, and that I wouldn't exchange my opportunity with any one of you; that I have a great faith in the possibilities of these peoples and this land; and that I rejoice to be able to share in the mighty advance of God's Kingdom in Turkey.

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